



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

GEORGE K. HEARTWELL
MAYOR

May 7, 2007

Representative Andy Meisner, Chair
House Commerce Committee

Dear Representative Meisner and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of HB 4261, which has been jointly requested by the Convention & Visitor Bureaus of Grand Rapids/Kent County and Greater Lansing. Convention and tourism is a vital industry for Michigan which generates \$17.5 billion for our state's economy, creates new jobs, and celebrates "Pure Michigan" across the country and around the world.

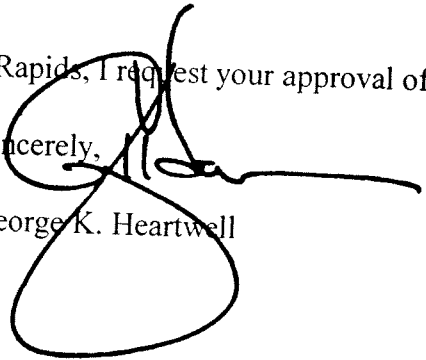
This bill will enable the Grand Rapids and Lansing areas to spur more convention and tourism growth for our respective communities.

Grand Rapids developed a new convention center that opened in 2003. We now have nearly \$100 million in convention business on the books through 2015. These conventions will bring 290,000 delegates to Grand Rapids and to Michigan. Today, we now compete with cities such as: Indianapolis, Columbus, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee--cities that have sales and marketing budgets 3 to 5 times greater than ours.

Tourism and convention activity is growing in our community. Yet this activity does not just happen. It grows as the result of strategic planning and many organizations, businesses, and individuals working together. HB 4261 enables our community—our local hotel industry specifically—to assess itself to operate a boosted convention and tourism marketing plan. We are now collecting the maximum allowed under current laws. The bill will strategically position Grand Rapids/Kent County to develop more Michigan convention and tourism activity for many years to come.

On behalf of the City of Grand Rapids, I request your approval of HB4261.

Sincerely,



George K. Heartwell